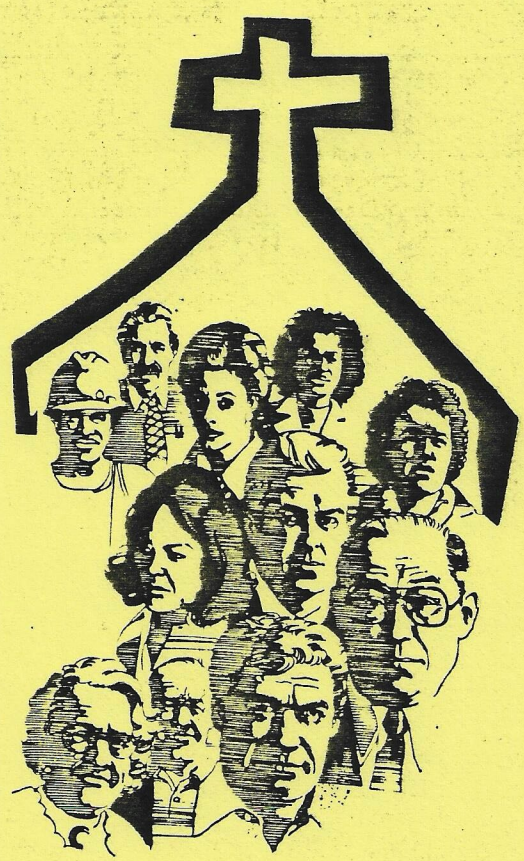
HOURLY WAGE EARNER CONGREGATIONS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A STUDY OF ELEVEN CONGREGATIONS



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January 1987

Co-Sponsored by the Appalachian People's Service Organization and the Working Class Ministry Steering Committee

HOURLY WAGE EARNER CONGREGATIONS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

In proposing to make a study of hourly wage earner congregations in the Episcopal Church, I was met by two objections from friends and colleagues. The first came in the form of a question which was only partly in jest, "Isn't that a contradiction in terms?". The answer to the question is, of course, "No". Hourly wage earners, working people, have been part of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion from their beginnings. The Sunday school movement began in the Church of England as an attempt to provide education for working class children who were forced to labor in factories from an early age. In 1966 I served a parish in Reading, England, composed mainly of persons who were hourly wage earners. Their families had been "C. of E." for generations, and it was the relatives of their ancestors who came to America and founded the Episcopal Church or who swelled its numbers. They were miners in Pennsylvania, mill workers in South Carolina, factory workers in Buffalo, New York. The Episcopal Church has included hourly wage earners in its ranks from its inception and has been enriched by their gifts and ministries.

The second objection to my study was by those who disliked singling out hourly wage earners as in any way different from others - from the poor and jobless on the one hand, and from the wealthy entrepreneur and independent managers and professionals on the other. I acknowledge my own dislike of such distinctions and am convinced that the Episcopal Church must deal with people as people, inclusive of rich and poor, young and elderly, if it is to be faithful to its mission. Despite this ideal, however, I believe that hourly wage earner congregations <u>are</u> different, that their people <u>do</u> have different needs, aspirations and capacities for ministry. One obvious difference is one to which many dioceses are becoming sensitive, that is, that diocesan conventions and church meetings on week days either eliminate hourly wage earners from attendance or else cause them to pay an inordinate price in lost wages for the privilege of attending. There are other differences which this report will seek to identify. It is my conviction that the Episcopal Church can become more effective in its ministry only as we identify these differences and work within the benefits and limitations they entail. It is interesting to note the extent to which we go in denying "class" differences in the church. A resolution passed by the 1985 convention of the Episcopal Church began as one calling for greater inclusion of working class people in the life and decisions of the church and ended up calling for recommendations from the State of the Church Committee to the Executive Council "on the strategies and plans which will facilitate the potential for leadership and ministry of all people, especially those whose working conditions limit their involvement, and which will assure their inclusion in local, diocesan, provincial and national structures of the Church." I wonder how many delegates understood the real intent of the resolution which was buried under verbiage intended to deny that there may, indeed, be class differences in American society and even within the Episcopal Church.

<u>How This Study Began.</u> In 1983 in Louisville and in 1984 in Newport, Kentucky conferences were held on "The Working Class Ministry of the Episcopal Church". The conferences were co-sponsored by the Appalachian People's Service Organization (APSO) and by the Episcopal Working Class Ministry Steering Committee. The conference served the useful purposes of giving a sense of support to laity and clergy involved in this ministry and providing them with ideas and models for their work. There was a growing sense of need at both conferences, however,

for additional information about what is actually happening in "working class parishes." In the fall of 1985 a group of people from APSO and the Working Class Ministry Steering Committee met with me in Newport to discuss this need and the possibility of my using an upcoming sabbatical quarter to begin such an inquiry. At the end of the meeting a proposal was written asking me to use my ten-week sabbatical to visit ten congregations with the threefold purpose of (1) gathering information, (2) being available to the congregations as a consultant, and (3) encouraging the congregations to undertake their own research on specific aspects of their congregational life and ministry. The committee members volunteered to submit names of prospective congregations and to investigate the funding possibilities to cover my travel expenses. I subsequently presented the proposal to the Dean and Sabbatical Committee of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, who agreed to the proposal as a valuable use of my time (agreeing also to continue my normal salary and allowances for the sabbatical quarter).

In a subsequent conference call, the committee members considered drafts of a letter to prospective host parishes and questionnaires to be sent to the ten parishes. (See Appendices A and B.) Letters were sent to forty parishes and missions and from among those responding we chose ten to be visited (later an eleventh one was included for a one-day visit at the suggestion of a host rector). In making our choices we sought to have as wide a geographical spread as we could manage within our budget and to include a variety of congregations. The list included St. Peter's in the Valley, Louisville, Kentucky; Christ Church, Quincy, Massachusettes; St. Luke's, Phillipsburg, New Jersey; St. Luke's on the Island, Wheeling, West Virginia; St. John's, Clearwater, South Carolina; St. Paul's, Graniteville, South Carolina; St. Mark's, Buffalo, New York; St. Bartholomew's, Wichita, Kansas; St. James', Oakland, California; North Parish in Ashland, Pennsylvania; and St. Martha's, Westminster, Colorado.

In my visits I managed to be present at Sunday morning services (except at Quincy and Graniteville) and to meet with clergy, laity and a variety of congregational groups. I sought to discover what worship was like in each congregation, how people viewed and valued their church, how decisions were made and programs implemented, and how mission, education, pastoral care and stewardship were carried out.

Two books were especially helpful to me as background reading. They were Tex Sample's Blue Collar Ministry and Raines' and Day-Lower's Modern Work and Human Meaning.

Finally I wish to express my gratitude to the Working Class Ministry Steering Committee for asking me to undertake this study and for useful advice on how to proceed with it, to APSO's Sandy Elledge for her good counsel and for her attention to the details of sending out letters and acknowledging replies, to my research assistant, Andrew Dietsche, for his bibliographical research and work on the parish questionnaire, to the Dean, Faculty and Trustees of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary for the time and support to carry out this study, and finally to the laity and clergy of the host congregations for their warm hospitality and for their witness that despite many obstacles, there is excitement, joy and love at work in the hourly wage earner congregations of the Episcopal Church.

Some General Observations and Limitations

In choosing churches to visit we attempted to have a broad geographical spread and to pick churches in a variety of communities, from the semi-rural mill towns of South Carolina to a deteriorated inner-city community in California. The committee tended to pick congregations, however, where "something interesting" was happening or where they had special regard for the clergy leadership involved. It took a high degree of security on the part of clergy and people to invite a seminary professor to come into their communities to look over their shoulders and ask questions for several days. It required also a willingness to look at what they were doing and to risk the possibility of discovering new or different ways of doing it. I acknowledge that the congregations and clergy who participated in this study were special in this regard, and that the results of the study may paint a more positive picture of what is happening in hourly wage earner congregations than is true in the average of such parishes and missions.

The Place of the Church in People's Lives

One thing stood out in all of the parishes I visited and that is that the church was not a casual or peripheral association in people's lives, but a central and vital one. Again and again people told me such things as, "This is my family" and "I've always been part of this church". Even newer members spoke of the church as something very precious and central to their lives. In asking people to say what was important to them about the church they responded with such words as "love", "warmth", and "belonging". There was a strong sense of being needed and appreciated. One group of women now living in a retirement home reminisced about how good it was to work together at church dinners and bazaars, and how it was like "one big family". One woman who was a retired secretary reflected on how, at retirement, she had offered her skills as a volunteer to an affluent parish nearby and how she never received a response to her offer. Her offer at her present parish had been welcomed with open arms and, while it still took her some time to be fully accepted by people, she is now a key person in that church. This brings us to the next section, some observations about leadership in the hourly wage earner congregation.

Lay Leadership: The Rerwards and the Costs

Leadership is both needed and appreciated in hourly wage earner congregations. There are times, however, when the costs of leadership exceed the rewards. This is most often the case for those who accept such central leadership positions as senior warden or chairperson of a search committee. In most of the parishes I visited there was a scarcity of persons willing to take on such leadership positions. One parish had gone almost a year without a senior warden because no one would accept the nomination. When people did accept the job they often found themselves overworked and undersupported. This results in a high level of burn-out among lay leaders. St. Peter's in Louisville identified a "burn-out cycle" in which leaders, feeling that no matter what they do it isn't enough, try harder, then feel tired and over-extended, and finally begin staying away for the sake of their own mental health. At St. Peter's the cycle was probably exacerbated for lay leaders by their suspicions that their vicar was about to leave, causing them to feel guilty that their failures were leading him to look elsewhere. Clergy in hourly wage earner congregations are appreciative of good hard-working leaders, but are often inclined to overwork them and to fail to provide the support they need.

Overwork and burn-out of lay leaders was hardly unique to one parish, but was one of the most consistent finding of this study. One parish had experienced the "dropping out" of three successive senior wardens. Another warden, still attending church, had learned to say no to every request for volunteer time. Two active senior wardens confessed to me that when this term was up they may well consider transferring to another parish where their needs for spiritual nurturing and pastoral care might be met. I was fortunate to secure an interview with one former warden who had dropped out of church for the year since her term ended. She talked about how draining it was to be a senior warden and work full time, about how much was asked of her and how she was fearful of going back to church where she would be forced to either move back into a heavy schedule of running things or else to say no to the requests and manage the subsequent guilt feelings. She told me, though, of a wonderfully sensitive "pastoral call" by one of the leading members of the church. He said something like this: "Sally, we miss you at church and wish you were with us. I know we have taken advantage of you and overworked you, but when you come back we'll try to do better. If we don't, then you let me know." She expressed great appreciation for his visit and his words. While she hadn't started going back to church, she said how happy she was that neither the rector nor her lay friends have nagged her about her absence, but just let her know she was missed.

One factor behind the dropping out of top lay leaders may be the lack of leadership skills in many other members of the church. I attended several vestry meetings in my visits and was struck by how often committee chairpeople reported that they just hadn't gotten around to calling a committee meeting or contacting the people they had agreed to contact. Much of this responsibility, I suspect, eventually falls back on the wardens and clergy who often decide that "If you want to get something done, you had better do it yourself". I am convinced that there is a need among hourly wage earner parish leaders for training in such things as running meetings, goal setting and the delegation of authority. Clergy, too, need help in doing such training and in learning to do a better job of managing volunteers. I am not certain of its implications, but the two vestry meetings which were most productive and efficient in the use of time were meetings chaired by senior wardens rather than by clergy. This brings us to the following section on clergy leadership.

Clergy and Hourly Wage Earner Congregations

Clergy in the Episcopal Church have a difficult time with hourly wage earner congregations for a number of reasons. The first reason is that such congregations are considered different from the "typical" Episcopal parish, which is supposed to be managerial and professional in its constituency. Since many wage earner congregations are small and economically marginal, they are often the places where clergy go from seminary or from a brief term as an assistant in a large, affluent parish. They thus become the places where clergy learn their trade before going on to the sort of parishes which they envisioned for their ministries. The contrast between the parishes of their curacies or the parishes from which they went to seminary and their first independent cures can be stark. More than one young priest has been thoroughly convinced that some small working class congregation was deliberately out to destroy his or her ministry. Negative feelings toward the congregation made up of hourly wage earners arise from clergy, but also have their origin in the congregations themselves and in dioceses. One priest, going to his first clergy gathering in his new diocese, reported on being greeted by a fellow cleric who asked what parish he was serving, and

when he named the church, saw his greeter turn away as if he no longer existed. Congregations are not likely to feel good about themselves when the clergy and people of the diocese perceive them as not desirable places to be, when their clergy stay for periods of only two or three years, when they lead an economically marginal existence, and when the church as a whole regards them as "different" from the typical Episcopal church. If the Working Class Ministry conferences held in the last three years have had no other value, I believe that they have been worthwhile in helping congregations see that they are not alone and that they have valid and important ministries to exercise.

A second difficulty clergy have with hourly wage earner congregations has to do with the image of the clergyperson in our Anglican tradition. Both in England and the United States, Anglican clergy have been seen as educated professionals. To the hourly wage earner congregation this translates as being "different from us". A common claim is that "Clergy are management; the people are labor". One of the best things an hourly wage earner can say about a priest is that he or she is "one of us". But getting to that point is not easy. It takes time to build trust, and our society and our education do little to teach us patience. The college and seminary education required of clergy teaches them sophisticated tastes in entertainment, dress, and social values. All these contribute to the separation between clergy and their hourly wage earner congregations. Meanwhile on both sides there is a tendency to translate what is different into what is bad or in poor taste. I am impressed with the way in which clergy in this study were able to appreciate many of the recreational choices of their people and live with a variety of fund raising activities which might not seem to fit their own concepts of stewardship, because they knew that their job was not to change people's tastes, but to minister to them where they were.

Differences in standards and values, however, often do create tension and sometimes real pain. I saw two instances in which this occurred in my host parishes. In one instance, a priest accepted a call to the parish on the condition that a new rectory be built to replace the old one which none of the candidates would accept. The parish rented a house for the interim and after a time he asked about the proposed new rectory. He was told that the money was simply not available, but he began looking around and discovered that funds were put away in several "other accounts", and that the total of these would be enough to erect the promised house. When he and his family finally moved into the house, a member of the vestry moved that the priest be asked to sign a lease promising that if the house sustained any damage from pets or other causes during his occupancy he would pay the damages. The proposal that he sign a lease resulted in an impasse between priest and people until the bishop was asked to give his opinion. The bishop pointed out that the request for a lease was unusual and that normally the rectory is treated to all intents and purposes as though it were the priest's own home. The vestry dropped the proposal, but I believe that the entire incident illustrates the "management-labor" tension which I mentioned earlier. The priest, in this instance, may have been "management", but as far as the vestry was concerned he was in the position of an employee. Their management style in dealing with him was modelled after employer-employee patterns they may have experienced in their own work life, patterns which caused the priest to feel belittled, unprofessional and hardly like a "fellow worker in Christ's vineyard."

Another instance in which a priest's relationship to his parish was hurt because of conflicting values arose when he was negotiating a new salary and benefits package. He had served the congregation faithfully as a dual career priest, and because the parish had experienced excellent growth in numbers and

budget he was giving up the secular half of his career to go full time in the parish. The committee considering the issue, however, decided that they ought to make the best deal for the parish possible based on the observation of at least one member that their priest had experienced a divorce and remarriage which might make him less attractive to other congregations! The proposal of a salary less than the diocesan minimum after the faithful service he had already given the parish was devastating to the priest and left him feeling devalued and less trusting than he might otherwise be towards his friends on the vestry. Again it appears that the model of "employer-employee" relationship used in this congregation was not the best possible one, but may have been the only one available to them without a good deal more experience of the unique relationship between the priest and lay people of a congregation.

I am convinced that all clergy need support systems outside of their congregations, in part to assist them in maintaining a realistic perspective on their work and on themselves. I believe that this is especially so in hourly wage earner congregations. The two examples I cited were instances where the priests involved would have profited by having a place to vent their anger and to learn that the proposed rectory lease and the less than minimum salary had nothing to do with their self-worth or their performance, but stemmed from the life experience of the people involved. Several of the clergy in this study spoke to me about the value of the support groups to which they belonged, and four of them took me to meetings of such clergy groups. The ecumenical groups seemed especially helpful since they were devoid of the competitiveness which often seeps into denominational gatherings. Bishops and their staffs need to be especially aware of the needs of clergy in small, isolated hourly wage earner congregations for regular attention and support. Failure to do so may cost the church some of its most dedicated and creative clergy leadership.

In four of the congregations, in my meetings with groups of members, I asked what they looked for in a priest. I received a diverse set of answers with little overlap. They included someone "who will listen to us", "who will stay a long time", "who know the Lord", "who will be willing to accept changes himself and learn from the congregation", "who knows who he or she is", "who will be willing to rock the boat", "who will please as many people as possible", and "with a broad enough knowledge and experience in worship to make choices that fit the congregation".

Finally, in regard to clergy leadership, I wish to comment on the one priest in the study who was part-time in his parish. Because his wife has seniority in her job and is willing to go along with the arrangement, he works for less than half salary on a month-to-month basis. Despite this arrangement he appears remarkably secure and relaxed in his work. His lack of dependence on the congregation for support undoubtedly helps him to do this. While the arrangement seems to work well in his case, I doubt that we could find many other clergy who could feel secure working in this kind of arrangement.

Mission and Outreach

Just before undertaking this study I spoke of it to a bishop who reflected with me about two yoked parishes he served early in his priestly ministry. He noted that one church was in the "management" section of town and the other was in that section where most of the factory workers lived. He observed that it was easy in the management parish to get people together to discuss everything from theology to politics, and that his vestry was delighted to set policies and prepare resolutions to diocesan convention. None of this seemed to work

in the other congregation, but when he had some concrete human need to deal with, the situation was reversed. The factory worker congregation was quick to respond to a neighborhood tragedy or a human need while the management congregation was less responsive to such situations. Again and again I found the observation (at least that part of it about factory worker congregations) confirmed in the parishes I visited. The people ran food pantries, served meals at soup kitchens, provided clothing banks and served other human needs with effectiveness and enthusiasm. They did this with surprisingly little prejudice or judgement. Indeed I was impressed with the way the people accepted into the congregation a young single woman with a new baby, a recovering alcoholic who was under court order to stay away from his family because of child abuse, a twenty-year-old man with Down's Syndrome who gave a delightful shoulder rub to each of us seated around a table at a prayer group meeting, and many others who might be rejected by other congregations. Indeed, one of the parishes referred to itself as a "congregation of losers", noting that most of the members had experienced divorces and other painful life experiences, but were welcome there. Perhaps the experiences of life's hard knocks made the people of these congregations especially capable of responding to the tragedies in other people's lives without asking whether they brought it on themselves or not. In any case, I found the churches in this study uniquely gifted for this kind of mission and ministry.

Worship and Music

The eleven churches I visited showed a variety of levels of ceremonial, but a common element in the worship was an element of informality which seemed to be appreciated and accepted by all. The sermons, for example, were seldom preached from the pulpit from a written text. One member commented on his priest's sermons, "He doesn't preach at us; he talks with us". In at least one church the congregation was encouraged to talk back, and did. The sermons included many personal illustrations and spoke to the life situations of the people. There was good lay participation in the services, with lay people reading lessons, leading the prayers of the people and making announcements. The passing of the peace seemed like the high point of the service in all but one parish, but there the brief and formal expression in the service was supplemented by a general round of enthusiastic greetings after the final hymn. People seemed glad to see one another and were very physical in their expressions of that gladness. Indeed, in two congregations concern was expressed to me that the physical expressions were getting out of hand and needed to be curbed.

People in hourly wage earner congregations value their contact with one another on Sunday mornings. I found many people arriving early at church and drinking coffee in the parish hall as much as an hour before the service, while others stayed late to talk with friends over more coffee and refreshments. In one church I was impressed with the depth and openness of a table conversation among several women who were going through the trauma of divorce and readjustments to being single. The rector was a sensitive and helpful participant in the conversation.

Fitting in with the informal quality of worship was the almost universal use of alternative music, the "folk" sort of hymns associated with various renewal movements such as Cursillo and Faith Alive. While congregations could and did sing the traditional hymns found in the Episcopal Hymnal, they really seemed to come alive on the spirited hymns of revival. One parish experienced a doubling

of Sunday attendance at worship when the singing was lead by a young man who played the guitar and involved the people in singing such songs as "Amazing Grace" and "I Want to Be Like Jesus". These songs were easy to sing and involved more expression of feelings than traditional Anglical church music. Their use was one of the most consistent similarities I found in the eleven congregations.

Church Buildings and Rectories

The Rev. Richard Gerard, Rector of the Church of the Holy Spirit in the Diocese of Bethlehem, a cluster of four congregations, each with its own buildings, noted the importance of church buildings to his people. There were periodic rumors that the diocese or the rector was trying to close up one or more of the buildings because of the difficulty for the priest of holding services in four places every weekend, but he noted that that would never be his intention because the church buildings were "icons" to the people, communicating transcendence and holiness in a way that nothing else did.

Rectories and vicarages also have special meaning in the lives of hourly wage earners. In one of the parishes the large old rectory was rented out so that the rector could have a housing allowance and purchase his own home. Despite the fact that this arrangement was costing the parish nothing and in fact transferred costly maintenance to the new tenant, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction over the move. One woman who stopped coming to church spoke of a time when she was a young woman and needed to talk to someone. Passing by the rectory, she dropped in and received help. For her the priest being in the house next door to the church symbolized his availablity to her, something lost when he moved to his own home a mile away.

Maintenance of church buildings was seen as a problem in most of these churches. Inflation has created serious financial problems and, while members do a good deal of volunteer work in mowing lawns, painting and doing odd jobs, time needed by the church competes with time needed for maintaining their own homes. Maintenance of rectories sometimes suffers in this tension and because of the shortness of funds for good preventive and emergency repair. One priest spoke of his dismay in coming home to find that the new hot water heater was installed in the kitchen rathen than the basement in order to effect a saving of twenty-five dollars. He decided to have it moved at his own expense rather than have the kitchen crowded by this unsightly addition.

The National Economy and the Hourly Wage Earner

In Modern Work and Human Meaning, Day-Lower and Raines discuss the hardships and uncertainties many hourly wage earners, particularly industrial workers, are experiencing in America today. In the worst position are the unemployed, but also hurting are the growing body of underemployed, those who have lost well-paying union jobs on assembly lines and as skilled laborers, and have had to accept lower paying service jobs, jobs often lacking in the fringe benefits that had given their lives a measure of comfort and security. One man had to give up a highly trained position as a photoengraver in New York City for work as a plant guard at one-third the wages and few of the benefits given him in his former position. At 58, life seemed to hold little promise for him and he was understandably depressed.

I met many workers in my travels in similar situations to the man just described, men and women with similar lack of hope for the future. I met some of the unemployed. I met some who had found themselves moving down, not up the job ladder, and consequently were having difficulty making house payments or sending their children to college. I saw textile mills in South Carolina with parking lots one-third full. I heard expressed the fears of those who were still working, fears that the owners might be moving the plant to Haiti or Korea to find cheaper labor. I had lunch with one man who made a medical claim for an injury sustained on the job. His employer had advised him not to make the claim. For his defiance of the advice he was fired the day after he returned to the job. I met an automobile engine block assembly line worker who was aware that he was becoming a dying breed in America, but who had at least ten more years to work before he was eligible for retirement. I met retired shipyard workers who were glad that they had made it to retirement because the local yards were about to close and younger men and women would soon lose all the investment of their years with the yards.

To be sure, the work world of hourly wage earning Americans has always held some insecurity. Factories can close. Technological advances can make skills obsolete. Even higher salaries and benefits for workers may threaten to make production too costly and bring about plant closings and transfer of industries to places where wages and taxes are lower. All of these threats, however, have had accelerated impact on wage earners in recent decades due to high inflation, lower production costs in other countries and rapid technological advances. Some futurists are saying that workers should figure on at least one and possibly two complete job changes in their working lifetimes, but I know of nowhere in the United States where we find social and industrial policies to make such transitions possible. The very size of industries today has made employment less personal and has increased the ease with which owners and managers can cut work forces or close less profitable divisions. Unions have been forced to cut their demands and even to accept lower wages and benefits out of fear of losing a local industry and everyone's job. The acceptance by many workers of the management parternalism which exists in Japanese industries and has come here with Japanese auto plants may have a far-reaching influence on American wage earners. One such influence may be an increased sense of powerlessness and dependency. ("Don't worry. Nissan Motors will take care of you!")

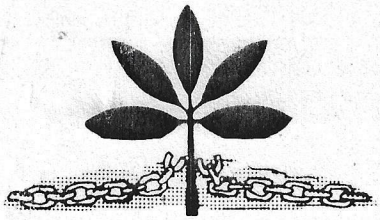
The church can, and often does, perform a significant role in the lives of hourly wager earners in this time of economic threat and uncertainty. It provides a personal oasis in an increasingly impersonal world. The church has special value for those with no family ties in the community. Many people with whom I spoke expressed sorrow over the fact that their children had been forced to move away to find employment, but these same people were grateful for the fact that the church had become "our family". The church also has been able to set up food pantries and clothing banks and has become a more personal and less institutionalized source of help than are public agencies. The church is a place to be known by your first name and a place where you can feel needed, even when the factory or shipyard says that you are no longer needed.

The church among hourly wage earners does play an important role as a source of comfort in pain, personal belonging in an ohterwise impersonal society, and help in time of need for those who are wounded by the trials of our economy. Unfortunately, the church, at least as far as I have seen it, has been less

successful in dealing with the sources of the pain and needs, the public policies which support change with little consideration for those impacted by it, the corporate decisions which put whole communities out of work. Tex Sample gives an example of a Roman Catholic Church in San Antonio which has been successful in such a "public ministry", but we all have much to learn about how to undertake and implement a ministry which may bring about changes in communities which will prevent dehumanizing workers and shattering the lives of countless families. Clergy and seminarians need to learn more about public ministry, and to understand that all ministry is based on a trusting relationship between clergy and people which requires time and mutual faith in order to develop.

Some Final Comments

In the beginning of this report I cited the threefold purpose of my study as (1) gathering information, (2) being available to the congregations as consultant, and (3) encouraging the congregations to undertake their own research on specific aspects of their congregational life and ministry. The body of this report has summarized the information that I have gathered. I was available in my visits as consultant and was utilized in varying degrees by the clergy, vestries and individual lay members to discuss various aspects of their work. Several congregations expressed interest in undertaking research. The topics included youth ministry, Christian education, preaching, worship and outreach. In the coming weeks I plan to contact each congregation to encourage them to follow through on these and other research possibilities. There is sufficient wisdom in these eleven congregations to provide significant information for other hourly wage earner congregations throughout the country.



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APPENDIX A

A Regional Coalition
of Episcopal Dioceses

Letter Asking Parishes to Participate in Wage Earner/Working Class Ministry Project

Atlanta

Bethlehem

Central Pennsylvania

East Tennessee

Lexington

Maryland

North Carolina

Ohio

Pittsburgh

Southern Ohio

Southwestern Virginia

Tennessee

West Virginia

Western North Carolina

Dear

While we are beginning to learn some things about the working class congregation from people like Tex Sample, author of Blue Collar Ministry, and others, we still have much to learn about working class congregations in the Episcopal Church.

I invite your help in a research project seeking to gain such information. Supported by a research committee formed by the Ohio Valley Working Class Congregations Network, the Mill City Clergy Network (Massachusetts), the Appalachian People's Service Organization, and St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Wichita, Kansas, and with the cooperation of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary which has permitted me to use ten weeks of sabbatical leave for this project, I shall be visiting ten working class congregations beginning March 15, 1986. I am inviting you and your people to take part in the study.

The plan is for me to spend three to five days in each of the congregations. My role would be two-fold: (1) to gather information on how your parish works, and (2) to be a consultant to you and to the people of your church on any issues or concerns that may be important to you or to them, e.g., mission, evangelism, stewardship, ministry with a specialized group such as older people or young families.

One hope we have is that each congregation will undertake a research project of their own, the results of which they would be willing to share with other Episcopalians. We expect to be able to provide some funding to parishes willing to do this. Again we hope that the subject of the research will be chosen by the priest and congregation. There is so much that we have to learn about leadership, education, worship, outreach, stewardship and other forms of ministry in working class parishes.

The Rt. Rev. Charlie F. McNutt, President

Patricia Selwood, Vice-President

The Rev. Stephen Alexander, Secretary

Lawrence Renfroe, Treasurer

Since I am proposing to be a resource to you and your congregation, let me tell you of some of my background. I am Professor of Ministries and Director of Field Education at Seabury-Western. As such, I work with both students and clergy as a trainer and supervisor in Field Education, I teach courses in Ministries, Pastoral Care in Crisis, Aging, Alcoholism and Education. I have also served as a consultant to congregations on a variety of issues and have led workshops on dual career marriages, lay ministry and aging and was the keynote speaker at the first Episcopal conference on Working Class Ministry in 1984. Before moving to Seabury ten years ago, I was a parish priest in Maryland for twenty-one years. I did doctoral studies at Drew and at Wesley Seminary. I am the son of a working class family.

If you would like to take part in this project please contact me as soon as possible. For further information call me at 312/328-9300 or Sandy Elledge at 703/552-3795.

episcopal church

Faithfully yours,

Robert W. Carlson

APPENDIX B

Wage Earner/Working Class Ministry Project
Parish Profile

The following information is intended for statistical and comparative purposes only, and is not intended or expected to give a full picture of the life of your congregation. Much of the information can be taken directly from your parochial report, and for that which cannot, we ask only that you make a reasonable estimate.

Please make every effort to return this form to me before _____ so that I will have an opportunity to review it before my visit.

Name of Church _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Phone _____ Mission or Parish _____

Schedule of Services: Sunday _____

Weekday _____

Number of Households _____ Number of Active Communicants _____

Number of Baptized Members _____ Of Those, Number of Children _____

Number of People over 65 _____ Number of Single Parents _____

Number of Communicants 5 Years Age _____ 10 Years Ago _____

What Percentage of Your Members are Employed as Hourly Wage Earners _____

In What Percentage of Families in Your Congregation do both Parents Work _____

What is the Racial Makeup of Your Congregation (Percentages)

White _____ Black _____ Hispanic _____ Asian _____ Native American _____ Other _____

1985 Budget _____ 1986 Budget _____

Number of Pledging Units _____ Average Weekly Pledge _____

Clergy Salaries: Rector/Vicar _____

Other _____

Diocesan Apportionment _____

Property Value _____

In what areas are your parishioners employed? (Percentages)

Professional _____

Factory/Industrial _____

Service _____

Clerical _____

Military _____

Unskilled or
Semi-skilled labor _____

Agricultural _____

Unemployed _____

Retired _____

Other _____

_____

What is significant about your church which has not been asked?

What are you most proud of in your congregation?

In what areas do you need the most work?

Signature of Rector/Vicar _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

CHURCH NAME	CITY	STATUS	HOUSEHOLDS	COMMUNICANTS	BAPTIZED	CHILDREN	OVER 65
St. James the Apostle	Oakland, CA	Parish	51	74	*	25	21
St. Martha's	Westminster, CO	Mission	43	90	114	21	6
St. Luke's	Wheeling, WV	Mission [1]	37	42	64	12	12
St. Mark's	Buffalo, NY	Parish	212	275	513	60	112
Christ Church	Quincy, MA	Parish	300	400	588	40 [2]	140
St. Bartholomew's	Wichita, KS	Parish	72	107	146	41	10
St. Peter's -in-the-Valley	Louisville, KY	Mission	84	137	188	33	25
Church of the Holy Spirit	Ashland, PA	Parish [3]	80	270	340	40	175
St. John's	Clearwater, SC	Mission	40	80	110	30	11
St. Paul's	Graniteville, SC	Parish	38	144	148	*	39
St. Luke's	Phillipsburg, NJ	Parish	141	244	269	65	100

* Information not available.

NOTE: Some statistical information is estimate only.

[1] Formerly a parish.

[2] There is a long tradition in the community of baptism at Christ Church, although attendance is less regular. There are about 40 children active in the church school, but another 40 should be.

[3] Parish by canon; historically and existentially a mission.

CHURCH NAME	MEMBERSHIP 5 YEARS AGO	MEMBERSHIP 10 YEARS AGO	PLEDGING UNITS	AVERAGE PLEDGE	HOURLY WAGE EARNERS (%)	TWO INCOME FAMILIES (%)	SINGLE PARENTS
St. James the Apostle	93	192 [4]	0	-	30%	8%	0
St. Martha's	139	189	33	$17.95	46%	13%	4
St. Luke's	*	*	17	$ 5.50	- [5]	50%	1
St. Mark's	567	662	131	$ 7.00	46%	33%	18
Christ Church	500	600	201	$ 3.36	80%	85%	30
St. Bartholomew's	54	64	63	$15.00	95%	75%	22
St. Peter's-in-the-Valley	114	114	68	$ 7.65	80%	90%	10
Church of the Holy Spirit	276	253	76 [6]	$ 5.50	70%	80%	4
St. John's	90	93	30	$14.26	45%	77%	4
St. Paul's	105	90	*	- [7]	42%	30%	11
St. Luke's	408	450	*	*	50%	80-90%	50

* Information not available

[4] Reported, but inflated.

[5] It is difficult to calculate a percentage. Majority are hourly wage earners. Also, most of the people are retired, unemployed, or on disability; most of these were hourly wage earners.

[6] Not accurate, due to many who are committed givers but will mot make a pledge.

[7] Total pledges: $43,400.

CHURCH NAME	RACIAL MAKEUP (%): WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER	CLERGY SALARY	OTHER SALARY
St. James the Apostle	39%	20%	39%	2%			$10,200 [8]	$3,000
St. Martha's	100%						$25,000	
St. Luke's	100%						$10,500 [8]	
St. Mark's	99.9%	.1%					$16,000 [8]	- [9]
Christ Church	99%				1%		$23,400	$4,680
St. Bartholomew's	99%	1%					$15,400 [8]	$5,650
St. Peter's-in-the-Valley	99%						$25,000	$4,400
Church of the Holy Spirit	100%						$16,000 [8]	$6,120
St. John's	100%						$32,571 [10]	
St. Paul's	100%						$16,020 [8]	
St. Luke's	99%	1%					$18,000	

NOTE: Some statistical information is estimate only.

[8] Plus housing, insurance, auto, pension.

[9] Plus non-stipendiary deacon.

[10] Salary $23,464; housing $9,107; plus auto, pension, insurance. Mission contributes $11,395.

CHURCH NAME	EMPLOYMENT BREAKDOWN (%):						
	PROFESSIONAL	FACTORY/INDUST.	SERVICE	CLERICAL	MILITARY	UNSKILLED	FARM
St. James the Apostle	5%		35%	5%		35%	
St. Martha's	8%	10%	25%	25%			
St. Luke's [11]	---------- See Footnote 11 ----------						
St. Mark's	1%	15%	10%	20%		25%	
Christ Church [12]	5%	----See Footnote 12 ----------			2%		
St. Bartholomew's	1%	45%	20%	17%		9%	
St. Peter's-in-the-Valley	10%	60%	5%	10%	2%	2%	
Church of the Holy Spirit	10%	30%	30%	10%			
St. John's	3%	17%	21%	22%		9%	
St. Paul's	14%	22%	9%	22%		3%	
St. Luke's	1%	20%	3%	25%	- [13]		1%

CHURCH NAME	UNEMPLOYED	RETIRED	OTHER
St. James the Apostle	10%	10%	
St. Martha's	2%	10%	20% [14]
St. Luke's		36%	2% [11]
St. Mark's	4%	20%	5%
Christ Church		35%	
St. Bartholomew's	5%	3%	
St. Peter's-in-the-Valley	1%	10%	
Church of the Holy Spirit	13%		7% [15]
St. John's	11%	12%	5%
St. Paul's	5%	8%	17% [16]
St. Luke's	5%	45%	

[11] The 2% "other" are persons on disability. The 62% not classified are difficult to categorize due to the very high unemployment, generally from hourly wage positions.

[12] The 58% of the congregation not accounted for here are primarily in blue collar or low-income service jobs, often at or below minimum wage.

[13] The Rector is an Air Reserve Chaplain.

[14] Homemakers

[15] The 13% listed under "unemployed" are temporarily unemployed. The 7% listed under "other" are chronic unemployed, many of whom earn money through "underground" temporary labor.

[16] 7% sales; 10% homemakers

CHURCH NAME	1985 BUDGET	1986 BUDGET	DIOCESAN APPORTIONMENT	PROPERTY VALUE
St. James the Apostle	none	none	$ 0	$ 189,932
St. Martha's	$ 46,909	$ 47,555	$ 3,000	$ 762,300
St. Luke's	$ 25,715	$ 40,875	$ 3,015	Building burned 1986, fully insured
St. Mark's	$ 68,000	$ 72,675	$ 6,475	$1,229,932
Christ Church	$103,172	$107,731	$ 4,565 + 5,500	$4,000.000
St. Bartholomew's	$ 38,810	$ 75,002	$ 5,231	$ 200,000
St. Peter's-in-the-Valley	$ 58,932	$ 74,493	$ 5,500	$ 696,000
Church of the Holy Spirit	$ 78,000	$ 78,000 [17]	$ 9,000	$1,062,600
St. John's	$ 25,137	$ 27,093	$ 4,702	$ 205,000
St. Paul's	$ 60,000	$ 65,000	$10,000	$ 110,332
St. Luke's	$ 59,900	$59,900	$ 9,900	$ 930,950

CHURCH NAME	SUNDAY SERVICES	WEEKDAY SERVICES	PARISH STRENGTHS	PARISH GROWTH AREAS
St. James the Apostle	3 [18]	0	1. Healing community 2. Field education site	1. Membership
St. Martha's	2	1	1. Ability to pull together	
St. Luke's	1	0	1. Service, outreach 2. Ability to pull together	1. Membership 2. Evangelism 3. Better distribution of labor
St. Mark's	2	1 [19]	1. Vitality of members 2. Courage 3. Good liturgy	1. Evangelism 2. Christian education 3. Leadership base
Christ Church	2	1		1. Incorporation of newcomers and marginalized persons
St. Bartholomew's	1	1	1. Rapid growth 2. Ministry to others	1. Stewardship 2. Evangelism 3. Need self-pride and leaders
St. Peter's-in-the-Valley	1	6 [20]	1. Liturgy	1. Christian education 2. Incorporation of elderly

CHURCH NAME	SUNDAY SERVICES	WEEKDAY SERVICES	PARISH STRENGTHS	PARISH GROWTH AREAS
Church of the Holy Spirit	4 [21]	0	1. Survival and revival 2. Carrying the Gospel	1. Mission strategy 2. Small church identity and pride
St. John's	1	1	1. Happy people 2. Incorporation of newcomers 3. Worship, spiritual growth	1. Leadership base 2. Visitation to sick and homebound 3. Youth ministry
St. Paul's	2	0	1. Commitment 2. Caring community	1. Organization 2. Leadership base
St. Luke's	2	1	1. Lay leadership 2. New rectory	1. Stewardship 2. Evangelism 3. Incorporation of new members 4. Christian education

---

[17] $12,000 deficit

[18] Two services in English, one in Spanish

[19] Plus Holy Days

[20] Morning Prayer, Monday - Friday; Holy Eucharist, Saturday

[21] Belongs to a four-point cluster

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

St. Martha's: The congregation's history during the past 12 - 15 years needs to be understood to explain the dramatic loss in communicants.

St. Luke's (Wheeling): The church is a Jubilee Center.

St. Mark's: Applying for Jubilee Center designation.

Church of the Holy Spirit: Unique in being a team/cluster which has operated for 15 years under a single vestry.

St. Paul's: Has a diocesan mandate to move to a more visible and accessible location within 5 years.

St. Luke's (Phillipsburg): Community combines urban and small town characteristics.